THE BUILDER,

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We have to report a fair rate of progressive improvement since the last week, and to add to our list of purchasers and subscribers. Not a day occurs but it brings an accession, and in some instances we have remarkably gratifying evidences of the interest which our project excites among the country workmen—to them, indeed, more than to the town workman, this publication is calculated to convey, as it really does, a higher amount of gratification and service; the London workman has access to so many publications, and sees the progress of building improvement day by day, and has, therefore, less need of the reading and information of this Journal, so far at least as we have at present proceeded. When we shall have assumed the full working attitude that is intended, then it will be that neither town nor country workmen will be able to dispense with it, at any rate not without loss and disadvantage to himself.

We shall take occasion in this place to remark on what has fallen to our ears from one or two quarters in reference to what certain of our London friends are expecting and calling for from us, even at this early stage of our position. They require us to commence at once on the system of laying down practical directions in constructive drawing, after the manner, as it is urged, of Mr. Peter Nicholson's books. Now, although, as we have observed before, and also in this number, that something of the kind is our intention, we think we should be very imperfectly fulfilling our purpose if we were to commence at this period; it would be not only a waste to a great extent of our own efforts, but a great injustice to many who have not yet had the chance of falling into our ranks. Suppose we were to begin now with a complete series of instructions in practical geometry, mensuration, carpentry, and masonry, when our readers are but ten in the hundred of what they may be expected to be; the consequence would be to deter many of those who do not start from the first from entering on the subject at all, or to compel them to do so at great disadvantages, first, as to buying up all the back numbers, and next as to reading through or studying the previous propositions contained in them. Neither do we think this ought to be asked of us; we have already been tolerably explicit, and think it is pretty well understood, that unless we receive that support in the outset which such a work requires, that it will not be our duty or inclination to force the publication forward. The public have so far very generously responded to our appeal; but many workmen we are enabled to say, and many of those who have much to say on the point of what they think THE BUILDER ought to contain, and the like, are the last to put their hands to the business of supporting it, at this time when it is so essential that a manifestation should be made of what is required, both on their parts and our own. Perhaps we are warranted in saying that no single work that ever issued from the press was marked by more encouraging symptoms of approbation, or more welcomed than this appears to be. This remark applies to all those who have already so generously stepped forward as purchasers and subscribers; but the thousands of working men for whose benefit it is specially intended, owe it to themselves to exercise that promptitude in marking their encouragement of our efforts which alone can be regarded as the true criterion of the existence of a legitimate demand for this class of publication.

There never was a period in the history of the building art wherein more was required to be done in the way we are proposing to do than this present. Great changes are on the eve of progress; indeed, we are entered upon them. Machinery and the iron manufactory on the one hand, and the demand for ornamental structures on the other, will make up an amount of variation from the present practice of building that it would be difficult to exaggerate. Engineering science is exerting an influence quite foreign to the most of our preconceived notions and habits; iron work is entering into the structure of every thing; iron roofs and floors are making great inroads into the province of the carpenter, and what we have said in another place with reference to machinery in masons' work has almost its parallel, in its application to carpenters' and joiners' work: doors, windows, and general moulded work is now being done, and by degrees will much more be done by machinery. The way in which all this is to be met is a question that cannot brook to be blinked much longer.

We would not have ourselves misunderstood, if it were possible that any misunderstanding could exist after what we have already said. The policy we would pursue is in all cases the prudent, the conciliatory, and the pacific. Science will not be checked in its advance without a damage to her combatants, but there is a way of retracting good from the pressage of adversity. Nay, it is said of adversity itself that it "is, like a toad, ugly to view, but wears a jewel in its head."

Another ground of hope for us is the growing demand for ornament in our public and superior private structures; the restoration of our fine old cathedrals and churches, and the building of new ones in a similar style of enrichment, will, beget a taste that will extend itself to every other class of edifices. Our ordinary masons and carpenters, therefore, will be called to exercise the vocation of carvers, and thus a large amount of elbow room, as we, term it, will be given to the rest; but yet how necessary it is that mechanical science and ornamental design should be studied, to prepare the present race of workmen for the new school of practice in their several callings.

It is consolatory to us to know and feel that there is this turn or shift of things to be calculated on, added to all which is the certainty of great public improvements in forming our streets, expanding our cities by clearing out the interiors; the destruction by fire, and the threatened destruction to follow, will compel many rebuildings that would otherwise be postponed till a much later period. These things united will provide an aggregate of promised employment that we may hope will be sufficient for the wants of our increasing population; but it is necessary, as we have already said, to be prepared for it; and the timely workman in this respect will, in all probability, be the successful one.

PATENT STONE-CUTTING MACHINE AND PATENT IRON MASONS!

We were at first perfectly appalled as we brought our eyes to the reading of two circulars that had been sent us, headed as above, and containing drawings of the apparatus so designated.

We have heard of the age of gold and of brass, and of a verity we are now in the age of iron. It was remarked to us once in a jesting humour, in reference to the common introduction of iron-work now-a-days, that we should have iron turn very shortly; but we little dreamt of a reality to be thus typified and avowed here, then, is no mincing the matter, nor need there be, for the machine that is applied to is in fact and in truth an "IRON MASON."

We have been accustomed to regard as a fabled monster that Briareus of the ancients, with his hundred hands, but now we begin to see that such inventions are not of the imagination alone; this "iron mason" has thrice the gift of hands of the giant son of Titan—the prospectus literally states that one of the machines is calculated to do the work of 300 men!

But now seriously to discuss this question, wishing, as we cannot avoid doing, all success in life to men of minds so ingenious as the inventors of these machines—being indebted to them for the favour they have shewn to our journal, for their subscriptions and good wishes in its behalf; amazed and delighted, as we are with the wonderful ingenuity which the drawings reveal, convinced also as we are of the efficacy of action which the machines possess, or may possess—seriously and solemnly, we are appalled at the thoughts it suggests. On the one hand, we see mechanical science, a giant power of human intellect thus embodied, promising great gifts and endowments to the commonwealth, but on the other hand, we see sixty thousand masons! sixty thousand trained and disciplined handicraftsmen, whose province this machinery will invade—sixty thousand men; who have served an apprenticeship, and invested their lives in their calling—whose prescriptive right it is to live by their calling—whose families depend upon them—we see this aggregate of at least a quarter of a million souls threatened, not with instant or total annihilation it is true, but with this gaunt and powerful competitor for their bread—he will withe their loaf at least; and who shall say that this can be borne!—we say it cannot—we say there is no such surplus in the working man's cupboard. We shudder to see every tenth mouthful of food intercepted in its passage to the mouth of so many (whatever it may do in) transferring to yet uncreated cravings!; we shudder to see the shredding of garments to clothe this portly invader, the pulling down of the poor man's roof-tree to house and tenant him. We are great admirers of mechanical science and machinery—we know that England owes a great deal of what is called greatness and an undoubted deal of wealth to these; but may we not and do we not pay, and have we not paid, in many instances, "a great deal too dearly for our whistle?"

We know that this is a dangerous, or as we usually say, a *ticklish* question to approach—but can we, or ought we to shrink from it? It is as much our duty to warn against danger as to point out the course of profit—as much to call attention to pitfalls as to guide to eminences—and for whom should we be solicitous? Assuredly for our class. It cannot be shewn to us that any general public denial or suffering is experienced which the introduction of this machinery would remedy. An increase of masons is not wanted, wherefore then these iron ones? But it will not do for us to be merely asking ourselves these and the like questions,—the matter must be argued gravely and dispassionately; and we are not sorry for this occasion of bringing us forward on a ground which so much requires to be probed, and bored, and tested; let us know what we are building upon, and we can the better answer for the security of the structure.

It is alleged, that this machinery will save four-fifths of the cost of preparing and working stone, that for every square foot now wrought by hand, at an expense of 4*d*., a saving will be effected to reduce it to something short of a penny, and that the work is done in a very superior manner. Granting all this, granting the benefit to the public from this great diminution in the cost of house building in the department of the mason work; granting that an increase will be given in the consumption of stone, and therefore a benefit to proprietors of quarries; granting that cheaper houses will be erected, and probably more of them in which the working man will reap a share of advantage in more ways than one; granting all that the advocates of machinery